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## *The New Me Is a Terrific Guy—With a Problem*

By JIM COMER

This is the day when people start doing things that they don't want to do. If the self-improvers get through today with their resolutions intact, tomorrow they will talk your arm off about how much thinner, or more organized, or nicotine-free they already feel. Not me. I have a whole new person under construction.

The me that I plan to be is a man of quiet, steady strength. I keep my head when all about me are losing theirs. I reek of stability.

My new improved model is bursting with self-esteem, while somehow retaining an aura of Gandhi-esque humility. I'm the kind of person whose wise, understated style draws others to him for counsel (but *never* to borrow money).

The future me is a physiological phenomenon: the stomach washboard-flat, the chest *a la* Rambo. My tan glows year round, and I no longer think of sit-ups as a curse invented by Californians to intimidate refugee Easterners. I look into mirrors without fear.

I floss my teeth every day, not just the night before a dental appointment.

I remember names, faces and the number of my checking account.

I write because I want to write. I approach my desk eagerly, not hounded by the threat of deadline or the specter of bankruptcy.

Punctuality has taken the place of procrastination. I finally realize that spontaneity is not synonymous with tardiness. I buy Christmas presents before Dec. 23 and send birthday cards in the same month as the birthday.

I pack the night before leaving on a major trip. After stuffing my ancient Samsonite with the very least amount possible to sustain life, I take out one-third.

I leave for the airport 30 minutes earlier and arrive without threat of a coronary.

The me of tomorrow rises with the sun. I greet the morning with enthusiasm and energy. I have a plan for each day, and I stick to that plan no matter who is being interviewed on the

"Today Show" or how long it takes to do The Times' crossword.

I am a fount of patience. When a toilet overflows or the roof leaks, I do not bribe a friend into fixing it for me. Instead, I take the time to investigate the problem thoroughly, figure it out logically and solve it myself.

I know the difference between a carburetor and a distributor.

My cooking is no longer considered comedy material.

I no longer tell people that my bathtub came in earth tones.

I do not pretend to like punk rock; I listen to Barry Manilow without shame.

I admit that I'm an adult.

I age gracefully, if imperceptibly. I tell the truth about how old I am, even though everyone thinks that I look much younger.

I remember how much I have to be humble about. I don't utter political opinions as if Moses had just handed me a missing tablet. And if I catch someone making a factual error in one of the seven subjects that I know something about, I do not gleefully offer a correction.

Though a non-smoker, I do not put on a look of martyred superiority when someone lights up in my home.

If someone cuts me to the quick, I remember that I get to decide whether or not I'll bleed.

In the me-in-progress, my spiritual side could qualify for sainthood. I read the Bible from cover to cover, including every single "begat" of the Old Testament.

I don't confuse prayer with a Christmas list or a plea bargain. I call on the Lord not only when I'm at the end of my rope, but also when I'm enjoying the illusion of self-control.

I ponder the fact that Jesus rode on an ass, not in a Porsche.

I no longer mistake orthodoxy for truth.

I learn the power of silence, remembering that the Creator can't speak to me when I'm talking.

Yes, I'm going to be quite a guy. I can't wait for the day I arrive. Neither can my friends. There's only one problem: what to do with the me who's currently in residence.

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